

Project Update: First Meetings of the Missouri River Spring Rise Plenary Group and Technical Working Groups

The first meeting of the Missouri River Spring Rise Plenary Group was held June 1-2, 2005, in St. Joseph, Missouri. The Plenary Group is the central deliberating body for the Spring Rise Facilitated Process. It is using a consensus building process to develop a Spring Rise proposal to be submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other involved Federal agencies by August 2005.

During the one and one-half day meeting at Missouri Western State College, the Plenary Group discussed its goal of developing a proposal for a Spring Rise on the Missouri River to positively influence spawning and recruitment of the pallid sturgeon, an endangered species. The group agreed to focus on developing a “starting point” for conducting a Spring Rise, including criteria for stopping and starting a rise, and the timing and flows for both a bi-modal and single rise. The group also discussed the need to understand the impacts associated with a Spring Rise and to work toward minimizing them. One idea is to use an adaptive management approach. This would adjust the starting point to respond to what is learned through monitoring of the Spring Rise process over a series of years.

In addition to discussing its goal, the Plenary Group also adopted operating ground rules and established several Technical Working Groups to support its work. The four Technical Working Groups formed by the Plenary Group will address Hydrology/Water Quality, Pallid Sturgeon/Fish and Wildlife, Socio-Economic, and Historical/Cultural/Burial Site issues. The groups’ tasks will include both developing options for consideration by the Plenary Group as well as providing them with technical information. The Technical Working Groups will meet twice before the next Plenary Group meeting, where they will present the results of their work.

The first meetings of two Technical Working Groups (Hydrology/Water Quality and Pallid Sturgeon/Fish and Wildlife), were held June 8-9 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Both groups met together for the first part of the meeting. The session included a presentation on the background of the Biological Opinion (BiOp) and work conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on possible models for a Spring Rise. Biologists in the Pallid Sturgeon/Fish and Wildlife working group provided input to the Hydrology/Water Quality working group on biological factors to be considered when developing a Spring Rise. Thereafter, both groups met individually to develop possible models for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to run before the next meeting and to develop biological hypotheses to be tested in the context of a Spring Rise. All four Technical Working Groups will next meet June 28-29 in Bismarck, North Dakota.

The next Plenary Group meeting will be held June 29-30 in Bismarck, North Dakota. For additional information on the facilitated process, the second Plenary Group meeting, and the Technical Working Group meetings, please go to <http://missouririver.ecr.gov/>